

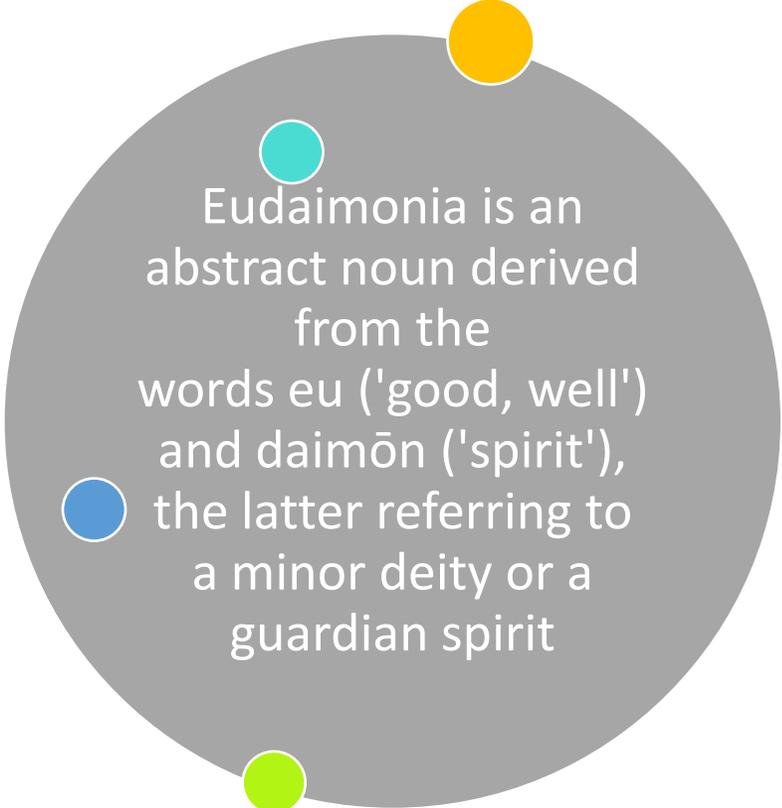
# The Good Life via Aristotle

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# Definition of a good life

...the function of man is to live a certain kind of life, and this activity implies a rational principle, and the function of a good man is the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed it is performed in accord with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, then happiness turns out to be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.



Eudaimonia is an abstract noun derived from the words eu ('good, well') and daimōn ('spirit'), the latter referring to a minor deity or a guardian spirit

# Eudaimonia as the highest aim



## **Happiness is a virtue**

*He is happy who lives in accordance with complete virtue and is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not for some chance period but throughout a complete life.*



## **Moral virtue is conscious choice**

Voluntary acts  
Involuntary acts  
Non-voluntary acts

# Kinds of “happiness”



## **Gratification and achievement**

The slavish way of pleasure, which is the way the majority of people think of happiness.

Money making, a life based on aiming at what is pursued by necessity in order to achieve higher goals, an intermediate good.



## **Contribution**

The refined and active way, which aims at honor, (honor itself implying the higher divinity of those who are wise and know and judge, and potentially honor).



## **Attainment**

The way of contemplation.

# Aristotle's "good life" parameters



# Courage



mean in fear and confidence



a courageous person must feel fear



a courageous person sometimes fears even terrors that not everyone feels the need to fear, but endures fears and feels confident in a rational way, for the sake of what is beautiful (*kalos*)—because this is what virtue aims at



beautiful action comes from a beautiful character and aims at beauty

# Temperance

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mean in pleasure and pain

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divided into those of the soul and of the body

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some desires like that of food and drink, and indeed sex, shared by everyone

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in "natural desires", few people go wrong, and then normally in one direction, towards too much

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regarding pains, temperance is different from courage

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a temperate person does not need to endure pains; the intemperate person feels pain even with in pleasures

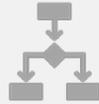
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intemperance is a more willingly chosen than cowardice, because it positively seeks pleasure, while cowardice avoids pain

# Generosity



how people act with regards to giving money, and things whose worth is thought of in terms of money



two un-virtuous extremes are wastefulness and stinginess (or meanness).



stinginess is taking money too seriously



wastefulness is not always the opposite (an underestimation of the importance of money)



wasteful person is destroyed by their own acts, and has many vices at once

# Magnificence



similar to generosity except that it deals with spending large amounts of wealth



immoderate vices in this case would be concerning "making a great display on the wrong occasions and in the wrong way"



paltriness on the one hand and tastelessness or vulgarity on the other

# Magnanimity

One must be good in a true sense, and possess what is great in all virtues.  
Typical characteristics of great souled people:

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They do not take small risks, and are not devoted to risk taking, but they will take big risks, without regard for their life, because a worse life is worth less than a great life. Indeed, they do few things, and are slow to start on things, unless there is great honor involved.

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They do not esteem what is popularly esteemed, nor what others are good at. They take few things seriously, and are not anxious.

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They gladly do favors but are ashamed to receive them, being apt to forget a favor from another, or to do a greater one in return. They are pleased to hear discussion about the favors they have done for others, but not about favors done for them.

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They are apt to act more high-handedly to a person of high station than a person of middle or low standing, which would be below them.

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They are frank in expressing opinions and open about what they hate and love. Not to be so would be due to fear, or the esteem one has of other's opinions over your own.

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They lead life as they choose and not as suits others, which would be slave-like.

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They are not given to wonder, for nothing seems great to them.

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Because they expect others to be lesser, and are not overly concerned with their praise, they are not apt to bear grudges, they are not apt to gossip, and they are not even interested in speaking ill of enemies, except to insult them.

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They are not apt to complain about necessities or small matters, nor to ask for help, not wanting to imply that such things are important to them.

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They tend to possess beautiful and useless things, rather than productive ones.

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They tend to move slowly and speak with a deep steady voice, rather than being hasty or shrill, which would be due to anxiety.

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# Gentleness



CORRECT MEAN CONCERNING  
ANGER



AN EXCESSIVE TENDENCY OR VICE  
CONCERNING ANGER WOULD BE  
IRASCIBILITY OR QUICKNESS TO  
ANGER



NOT BE LED BY THE EMOTIONS  
(*PATHOI*), BUT BY REASON (*LOGOS*)

# Friendliness

the attitude people have  
towards whether they  
cause pain to others

an obsequious (*areskos*)  
person is over-concerned  
with the pain they cause  
others, backing down easily

a surly (*duskolos*) or  
quarrelsome (*dusteris*)  
person objects to  
everything and does not  
care what pain they cause  
others, never compromising

# Truthfulness

concerns how to interact socially in a community

two kinds of untruthful pretense vices—one that exaggerates things, boastfulness, and one that under-states things

a very specific realm of honesty, that which concerns oneself

# Wittiness



a virtue of being witty, charming and tactful, and generally saying the right things when speaking playfully, at our leisure



a buffoon can never resist making any joke



an uncultivated person who does not get jokes, and is useless in playful conversation

# Further reading

- The Happiness Project and Happier at Home, by Gretchen Rubin
- The Happiness Hypothesis, by Jonathan Haidt
- The Pursuit of Happiness, by Darrin McMahon
- Small Pleasures, by The School of Life